

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An axle assembly comprising:
 - a first axle shaft defined substantially along a first axis of rotation;
 - a second axle shaft defined substantially along said first axis of rotation;
 - at least one an electric motor defined substantially along a second axis of rotation,
 - said second axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending
 - parallel to said first axis of rotation;
 - a first stage gear reduction driven by said at least one electric motor;
 - a second stage gear reduction driven by said first stage gear reduction; and
 - ~~a third stage gear reduction driven by said second stage gear reduction, said first~~
 - ~~axle shaft and said second axle shaft driven by said third stage gear reduction~~
 - a differential gear set driven by said second stage gear reduction to drive said first axle
 - shaft and said second axle shaft.
2. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein said at
least one electric motor comprises a first electric motor defined by said second axis of
rotation and further comprising a second electric motor defined along a third axis of
rotation, said third axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component
extending parallel to said first axis of rotation.
3. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein said first
stage gear reduction comprises a drive gear which drives an idler gear, said idler gear
~~which~~ drives a driven gear, and said driven gear drives said second stage gear reduction.
4. (Original) The axle assembly as recited in claim 3, wherein said driven gear is a
sun gear within said second stage gear reduction.
5. (Currently Amended) ~~The axle assembly as recited in claim 1,~~ An axle assembly
comprising:
 - a first axle shaft defined substantially along a first axis of rotation;
 - a second axle shaft defined substantially along said first axis of rotation;

an electric motor defined substantially along a second axis of rotation, said second axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending parallel to said first axis of rotation;

a first stage gear reduction driven by said electric motor;

a second stage gear reduction driven by said first stage gear reduction;

a third stage gear reduction driven by said second stage gear reduction, said first axle shaft and said second axle shaft driven by said third stage gear reduction; and

wherein said second stage gear reduction comprises a planetary gear set.

6. (Original) The axle assembly as recited in claim 5, wherein said planetary gear set comprises a carrier which drives said third stage gear reduction.

7.-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim ~~4~~5, wherein said third stage gear reduction ~~comprises a~~ includes a differential gear set ~~substantially contained within the two speed reduction gear set~~ coupled to said first and second axle shafts.

10. (Currently Amended) An axle assembly comprising:

a first axle shaft defined substantially along a first axis of rotation;

a second axle shaft defined substantially along said first axis of rotation;

a first electric motor defined substantially along a second axis of rotation, said second axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending parallel to said first axis of rotation;

a second electric motor defined substantially along a third axis of rotation, said third axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending parallel to said first axis of rotation;

a first stage gear reduction driven by said first and second electric motors;

a second stage gear reduction driven by said first stage gear reduction; and

a differential gear set ~~third stage gear reduction~~ driven by said second stage gear reduction, said first axle shaft and said second axle shaft driven by said differential gear set ~~third stage gear reduction~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 10, wherein said first stage gear reduction comprises a drive gear which drives an idler gear, said idler gear ~~which drives a driven gear, and~~ said driven gear drives said second stage gear reduction.

12. (Original) The axle assembly as recited in claim 11, wherein said driven gear is coaxial with said first axle shaft.

13. (Original) The axle assembly as recited in claim 10, wherein said second stage gear reduction comprises a planetary gear set.

14. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 13, wherein said planetary gear set comprises a carrier which drives said differential gear set ~~third stage gear reduction~~, said carrier coaxial with said first axis of rotation.

15. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 10, including a ~~wherein said~~ third stage gear reduction driven by said second stage gear reduction, said ~~third stage gear reduction including~~ comprises an input side gear coaxial with said first axis of rotation, said input side gear driven by said second stage gear reduction.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) An axle assembly comprising:
a first axle shaft defined substantially along a first axis of rotation;
a second axle shaft defined substantially along said first axis of rotation;
a first electric motor defined substantially along a second axis of rotation, said second axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending parallel to said first axis of rotation;

a second electric motor defined substantially along a third axis of rotation, said third axis of rotation extending along a direction having a component extending parallel to said first axis of rotation;

a gearbox assembly comprising a first stage gear reduction driven by both for said first and second electric motors, a second stage gear reduction, and a third stage gear reduction, said gearbox assembly located substantially between said first and second electric motors to drive said first and second axle shafts, and said first stage gear reduction driving a common second stage gear reduction, said second axis of rotation and said third axis of rotation being spaced away from said first axis of rotation, and said first stage gear reduction being spaced from said first and second electric motors in a common axial direction such that said first electric motor and said second electric motor are spaced axially from said first stage gear reductions in a common direction.

18. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 17, wherein said second stage gear reduction comprises a planetary gear set comprising a non-rotating ring gear ~~rotationally~~ fixed to a housing of said gearbox assembly.

19. (Currently Amended) The axle assembly as recited in claim 18, wherein said planetary gear set comprises a carrier coaxial with said first axis of rotation, to drive said third stage gear reduction said carrier adapted to drive a differential gear set coupled to said first and second axle shafts.

20. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 2, wherein said second axis of rotation and said third axis of rotation are parallel to said first axis of rotation.

21. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 10, wherein said second axis of rotation and said third axis of rotation are parallel to said first axis of rotation.

22. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 17, wherein said second axis of rotation and said third axis of rotation are parallel to said first axis of rotation.

23. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 17, wherein said second stage gear reduction is positioned on said first axis of rotation, with said first electric motor and said second electric motor being spaced radially outwardly of at least a portion of said second stage gear reduction.

24. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 23, including a third stage gear reduction driven by said second stage gear reduction, said third stage gear reduction being positioned radially inwardly of said first and second electric motors, and at a position along said first axis of rotation at which said first and second electric motors are positioned.

25. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 24, including a differential gear set driven by said third stage gear reduction, said differential gear set being coupled to said first and second axle shafts.

26. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 1, including a third stage gear reduction driven by said second stage gear reduction, said third stage gear reduction providing driving input into said differential gear set.

27. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 26, wherein said third reduction gear set comprises a two-speed carrier.

28. (New) The axle assembly as recited in claim 15, wherein said third stage gear reduction comprises a two-spaced carrier.